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I BRIGGS TALKS

By

MADELINE YALE WYNNE

With drawings by

GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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SI BRIGGS TALKS

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By
MADELINE YALE WYNNE
With drawings by
GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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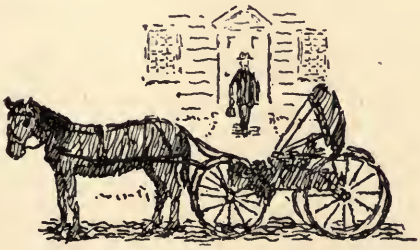
SI BRIGGS TALKS

CHARITY

Old Miss Stark is one of them that prides
themselves
Upon their charity.
One day
I heard her say
To Mis' Scruggs:
"I quite agree with you,
It's only fair to gave each one their due;
And mebbe Miss Crawley *is*
As sick as she *thinks* she is,
But I know she *thinks* she is
Fully as sick as she *is*."



SCRUGGS'S WIFE

THERE was a slue of them Second Adventists
Lived over to Hemlock Holler, a while back;
And one day they got word to prepare,
For the app'inted time had come to be took
up to heaven.
So they all dressed up in white
Ascension robes that night,
And trooped up to the top of Bald Hill,
Singin' and prayin' all the way.
Scruggs's wife was one on 'em.
He jest let her have her head,
And *he* went off to bed.
The transmogrification did n't come on time,

And they got kinder cold and discouraged;
For their heavenly clo's was n't exactly suitable
For the season, round in these parts,
And finally they come home mighty quiet.
Mis' Scruggs she tried the door,
But it was locked, and what is more
The pantry winder was nailed up.
Scruggs he seen to it that night,
That everything was locked up tight.
I guess he chuckled some when he done it.
Bimeby she hollered under his winder to see
If she could wake him up, but he
Slep' as sound as a possum up a tree.
She hollered and hollered,
And finally he put his head out o' the winder,
And says he, sort of wonderin' like, but severe,
"Who be you, knockin' at the door at this unairthly hour?"
"Why, Orrin," says she, "I'm your wife, let me in!"
"Wretched woman! Abandoned female!" says he,
"Go away, go away! I have n't got any wife;

She was took up to heaven
When the clock struck twelve at midnight. Go
away, go away!"
And he shet the winder and went back to
bed.
I've heard it said
She never went to no more ascensions.
It broke her of the habit.
I allers admired Scruggs.

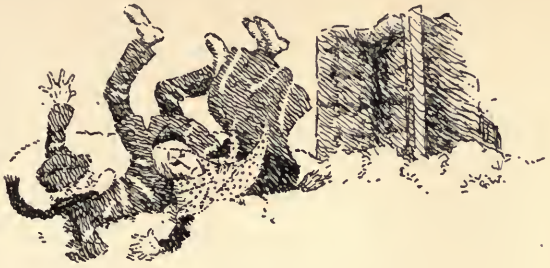
WITCH–TAIL COAT

You don't say so —
Never heered of a witch-tail coat!
Wall, I'll tell you.
Ef you see an old widower, all spruced up,
A-hangin' round the door of a widder's house,
  Sort of dubious-like 'bout goin' in,'
  You watch; and ef he's got a silly grin
On his face, you may take it,
That he's got on his witch-tail coat.

WORKED TOO HARD

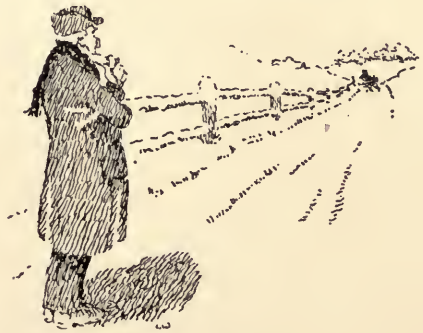
I PROPHESIED them Jones boys would fail up,
And they have, I knew they would.
They did n't go at farmin' the right way,
nohow.
They worked too hard; they made hay
Jest as if they did n't never
'Xpect to have 'nother sunny day.
They 'd ought to have set in the shade,
Sometimes, and figgered things out.
I often give 'em a hint,
As how they 'd orter stint
On buyin' so many fancy farmin' machines:
"Don't buy," says I.
"Gotto have 'em" says they.
"Why?" says I,

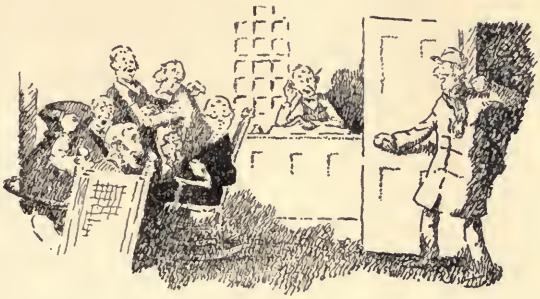
"Can't you borry,
Same as the rest of us does?
You'll be sorry
Ef you do buy." Then they'd laugh.
"Glad you're so rich," says I.
And that was the end on't.
You can't run t'other man's farm,
You only make him mad and do harm.
They was bound to fail up, anyhow —
They worked too hard.



SPILLING THE DEACON

I WAS standin' as clus as this to the road,
When I see the Deacon and his wife
Comin' along in that old yaller sleigh of his'n.
Just then the Deacon's off runner cut into the crust,
And the cutter went over neat as a pin;
The slickest thing I ever see. The Deacon,
He picked himself up, and picked up his wife,
And then he turned and watched the old hoss
A-careerin' off over the snow.
And he jest said, sort of meditatin' like to himself:
"Restless sperrit! restless sperrit! See her go!"





POLITICS

Old man Burr is bald
'Cept for a few white brussels,
And his head is as pink
As a baby's; looks jest like a clean pig.
When he has to think,
Which ain't often, he polishes his old pate
With a bandanner. Most on us has to *dig*
Up our idees, he seems to scour his'n up.
We was waitin' for 'lection returns, late,
Down to the tavern t'other night,
And when we heered New York had went
Republican,
We let out a yell. I seen old Burr
Was a-rubbin' up an idee, so I called out:

"Quit your noise,
You fool boys,
Give Burr a chanst!"
He was a-polishin' up his head to beat the band;
He could n't hardly open his mouth, he was so busy.
Finally he made out to say,
"What *I* want to know is,
How Baptist Four Corners has went!"

SWEET-CORN

Old Squire Bowen is gen'rally considered
a sharp man;
But one day he and I was talkin'
'Bout how to break a hoss of balkin',
When we see old Mis' Big'low sneak
Outer his sweet-corn patch
With her apron full of ears.
I s'posed he'd speak
To her 'bout it, but he only turned
The other way, kinder shame-faced.

"Why don't you go and ketch her at it?"
says I.
"I'd ruther
Go round t'other
Side of the barn. Gosh!" says he,
"I do hate to see an old woman steal."

JAKE BAGGS

EVERYBODY likes Jake:
He drives stage down Baptist Four Corners way;
And he'll deliver goods free gratis for nothing for a friend,
From a bunnit-box to a rake,
And he never makes a mistake.
He knows all about folks,
More 'n most folks knows about themselves.
But he ain't a-tellin' all he knows,
Not by a long sight.
He's a great hand for jokes,
Even if they're on himself.
He had an altercation, t'other day,
About a fare that was owin',
And the man would n't pay —

That's the way some folks is made —
And Jake lost out.
He grinned when he tole me, and says he,
Slappin' his knee;
"It's wuth seventy-five cents to me
Jest to know what I think of that feller."
I thought myself 't was cheap at the price.

NOW OR NEVER

Deacon Pease's wife is pizen neat,
She makes the Deacon wipe his feet
For half an hour on the mat
'Fore she'll let him so much as set foot in the kitchen.
I call that
Too much, I'd never stan' for it.
One day I heered her callin'
To him: he was haulin'
Hay into the barn;
And the sun was hotter 'n blazes.
Now there's nothin' in the world that fazes
A man so much as to have to quit a job
Jest as he's puttin' in the last licks.
She called out "D-e-a-c-o-n, dinner's ready."
"All right," says he, — "Steady

There!" says he to his hoss, — "in a minute,
Sarah."
"N-o-w or n-e-v-e-r, Deacon," says she,
And he come right in meek as a lamb.
I guess *his* shoulders is fitted to the yoke
All right.
But it might
Be jest as well for her 'tarnal salvation
If she got her come-up-ance
Once in a while.

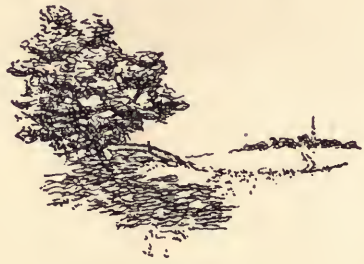
LAX

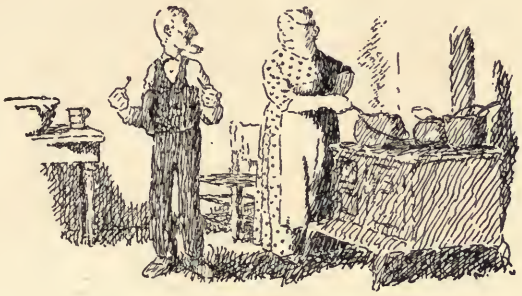
Got a new preacher over to the White
Church. The Deacon don't like him a mite;
Says he's lax on
Damnation and dancin'.
Ef there's anything the Deacon
Hates it's dancin'
And he fairly smacks his lips over damnation.
He won't never weaken
On that. So he set through the fust sermon
Stiff as a ram-rod.
Comin' out, he says to me, "Si," says he,
"'That sermon was simply sacreeligious —
Wuss 'n that,
'T was re*dik*ulus."

A GOOD CROP

YES, we've got as good a crop
Of old maids, as any town
In the western part of the state.
You might rightly say we are the top-
Notch as to old maids;
Though I say it who should n't,
Not bein' a married man myself.
And I'm not braggin',
Nor raggin',
When I say they're the best ever;
Best sort and most on 'em clever.
Not too many; *jest enough.*
Now, as you most likely know,
There's old maids and old maids,

(To say nothin' of spinsters,
They're different).
Old maids are jest as happy as other folks,
Once they quit strugglin'.
Spinsters never had no struggle,
They was jest born so.





A MODERATE WOMAN . . .

ALMON HUBBEL'S wife is a very moderate
woman —
The kind I like.
She don't particularly care
For Almon's half-sister, Maria.
She said to me one day,
Just after Maria had went out
Mad, and had shet the door hard;
Says she slowly,
Turnin' the doughnuts with a fork, carefully,
In the bilin' lard:
"*Ef* I live, *and* keep my eyesight,
I shan't think the time long ef I never see *her*
ag'in."

It made me laugh, 'cause she might
Have put it a sight
Stronger, and still been moderate.
Ever see Maria?

. . . AND HER BROTHER

Jonas Stark was tipped clean over,
With a load
Of hay on top. There wa'n't a mite of Jonas showed.
They had to fork off all the hay,
And pick him up, and dust
Him off, and he was the wust
Lookin' specimen you ever see.
They stood him up onto his legs,
Handlin' him like he was eggs:
"Be you hurt much, Jonas?" says 'Lanson.
"Wall," says Jonas, kinder thoughtful, "I dunno as it done me no good."
His arm was broke.

A PEACE PIPE

My brother Rufus had a little property left
him,
And he was considered a first-rate catch.
He got married.
I took my choice
And settled down to be an old batch.
(I like it better as a stiddy diet.)
Rufe, he comes over here often of an evenin'
To smoke in peace and quiet;
And it 'pears
Accordin' to his figgerin'
That 't ain't so much what his wife *says*,
That makes him tired,
But it's the sound of her voice
In his ears.

THE WEED AND THE WORM

DEACON HUBBEL is a godly man;
He preaches sometimes in the Orthodox
Church,
When we are out of a minister.
You kin allers count on a first-rate sermon
When he gits to callin' for vengeance on the
onrighteous,
'Specially when they are neighbors.
All the same,
It's rather a ticklish game.
One day he b'iled over and named names in
Meetin'. "The onrighteous are gittin'
bold in their sin,"
Says he. "Josiah Ray
Has been seen a-workin'
On the Sabbath Day."

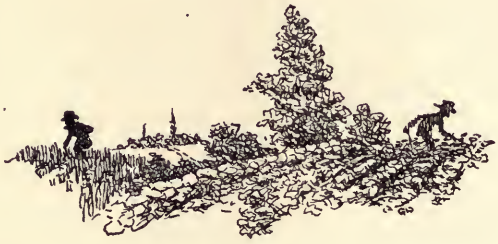
Simon Flint was to meetin', and bein' a
righteous
Man himself, he went right over to Ray's and
says to him:
"Mr. Ray," says he, "I hear as how you have
been seen
Workin' on the Sabbath Day."
"Who says that?" says Josiah, gittin' red
In the face. "Deacon Hubbel, he seen you,
so he said."

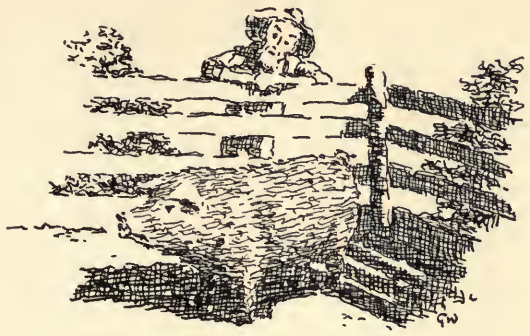
"He never seen me!
I'd like to know when and where!"
Says Ray, "And furthermore," says he,
"I *know* when he seen me;
He was a-workin' on Sunday, himself,
In his onion-bed, I seen him.
Now, mind you, I don't say but how I might
have been
Walkin' through my tobacker patch,
But I wa'n't a-workin'; 'course,
If I come across a worm
A-devourin' a tobacker leaf,
I might uv flicked him off;
But I wa'n't a-workin' on the Sabbath Day.

But Deacon Hubbel he *was* a-workin': he was
weedin',
I seen him at it, he was a-weedin' his onion-
bed."
Simon Flint, bein' a searcher after truth,
Went straight back to Deacon Hubbel.
"Deacon," says he,
"Ray says he wa'n't a-workin' on the Sabbath,
But he seen *you* a-weedin' in your onion-
bed."
"I wa'n't a-weedin'," says Hubbel, "I never
did!
He might have seen me walkin' in my onion-
bed,
And if I see a weed or two
As I was passin' through
I might have stooped and snaked 'em out.
But he never in the world seen me workin'
On the Holy Sabbath Day, never,
I declare for 't!"

When Simon Flint told me this
He shook his head
And said,
"I've often tried

But never yet have seed
The difference between
A-flickin' off a worm,
And a-snakin' out a weed."





PHIN KIBBEY'S HAWG

PHIN KIBBEY 'S got a sick hawg
Over to his place;
Hair 's p'intin' straight to his eyes,
Eyes p'intin' straight to hell;
Kibbey says the durn critter 'l prob'ly die.

HIS TONE

THE Deacon don't use strong language, as a rule,
But one day lately I caught him mighty nigh it.
Not that it mattered much to me;
For I don't care,
I swear
Myself, sometimes. But then I'm not a Deacon.
He was washin' his sheep, down to the shallers;
And he'd had a turrible tussle
With one old ram of his'n.
It took all his muscle
To hold him. The Deacon was up to his middle in water,
And none too stiddy on his feet.

I could see him gittin' madder and madder,
And the old ram on his hind legs a-buttin' and
a-buntin' 'im.
Bimeby the Deacon ketched a-holt of the
rantankerous critter
By the scruff of the neck, and shook him fit to
kill,
And says he, kinder bitter, between his teeth,
"You old woolly creetur, you!
You old woolly creetur, I'll larn ye
There's a God in Israel!"
He was rarin' tearin'
Mad, and it did sound considerable like
swearin',
But come to say the words over ag'in,
They was harmless enough in themselves.
The cuss was in the tone, I guess.

AN ALL-ROUND MAN

I WAS over to the Library t'other day,
Hangin' round for Sam Bates to close up.
He's Librarian, you know.
I wanted him to come over and show
Me what's the matter with one of my clocks.
He knocks
Spots out of any one alive,
In the tinkerin' line.
He's an all-round man; that's why
They 'p'inted him Librarian.
A woman come in jest then to look
For some kind of a book
About nights, she said.

So Bates he handed her out the ARABIAN NIGHTS.

She sort of smiled, and said, "Not nights but knights,"

Spellin' it out, k-n-i-g-h-t-s.

Says Bates: "There ain't but one proper way to spell nights,

And that ain't got no k into it."

There wa'n't no book in the Library

With the word spelt that way, so fur as he knew;

But after she had went we looked it up

In the dictionary, jest for fun,

And b' gosh! the woman was right!

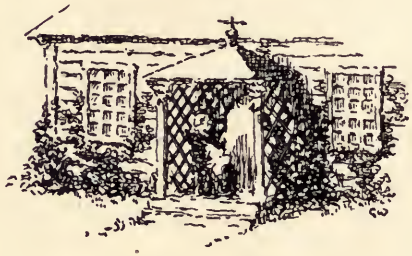
UNCLE SID

You could n't faze Uncle Sid.
They tell this yarn
On him: One day Hiram, Uncle Sid's hired man,
Went out to the barn
And hung himself to a beam.
A neighbor found him, and ran
In and told Uncle Sid.
He jest shook his head
And said,
"Wall, wall, what'll Hiram do next, I wonder!"

AUNT SPIDDY'S CONTRIVANCE

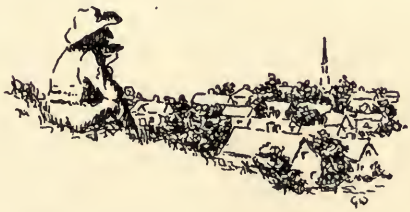
You see that little porch, front of the brown
house?
We call that Aunt Spiddy's Contrivance.
She kep' hens, and sold eggs,
And the way she saved money was a caution.
And with the hen-money
She built that contraption.
My! but Aunt Spiddy was funny;
Her son and his folks come home one summer:
The house was small and the weather was
hot,
And she wa'n't never strong, and she
worked a lot.
The day they left, I went in to borry an egg
(We lived next door),

And I found her pourin' b'ilin' water on the
kitchen floor,
From the tea-kettle.
"Fur the lan's sake, what be you doin'
Aunt Spiddy?" says I.
"You must be gittin' blind," says she,
"If you can't see
Plain facks;
I'm looking to it that there ain't nobody
Left behint in these here cracks."



THE BLACK-LIST

I've jest seen Ed Buzzell's black-list.
It's a caution to snakes!
He keeps a list of all the folks to hate;
Keeps it strictly up to date,
'Cause he makes
Changes from time to time,
As 'casion warrants, and
Won't trust his mem'ry.
Now I'm waitin'
To see a white-list;
But I guess folks don't keep 'em.
Mebbe hatin'
Comes more natchral.



IT TOOK THE TRICK

Some folks thinks women ought to be allowed
To go to town meetin' and vote,
And then ag'in there's others that don't.
I dunno, they tried it once here on the school question;
The women went up to register, all right
Enough, but it seems the selectmen were n't quite
Onto their job, and they would n't let 'em do it.
They said they'd be durned if they did n' see to it,
So fur as they *could*, that the women-folk staid to hum,
Where they belonged. I snum,
But them women was mad! And they went to law;
They sued the selectmen.
And what's more they won their case, easy.

And the selectmen had to pay the fine
For not follerin' the law.
And not a man in town give a peep or a sign;
They jest kep' mum.
But come
March meetin' they voted, to a man,
To make the town pay back the fine.
The joke
Was, that the women-folk
Was taxed
On more'n two-thirds the property in town.
And it smarted some to be axed
To add this fine to their reg'lar assessment.
Anyway, the women squirmed;
But you kin see it was all fair
Enough, and square
And above board.
And the men did n't care
If the women did kick;
'Cause the men had the vote,
And the vote took the trick,
That time.

THE FOOL, THE VOICE, AND THE HOE

Joe was dull, but his hoe was sharp,
A blamed sight sharper'n his wits.
He was a cheap hand,
Come from the poorhouse; screw loose somewhere.
He slashed the potatoes with his hoe,
And sp'ilt 'em.
"You had n't ought to have no potatoes to eat,
Ef you can't hill 'em,"
Says the farmer, him he worked for,
"And you shan't eat 'em nuther,
Ef you can't larn to hill 'em."

"Hill 'em, hill 'em!
Kill 'im, kill 'im!"
The fool heard a voice say, all down the row.
Afterwards he told us so.
And the next time the farmer went by
He done it —
He up and slashed him, jest as he done the potatoes.
His hoe was sharper 'n his wits
And the doctor said he'd allers had fits.
I dunno, mebbe he did.

FELT TO HUM

Say, was you to the High School Graduatin'
Supper
Last night?
Wall, I wisht you had been!
There was some bright
Speakers there, and the Upper
Class was some class, too.
But there's one thing 's been botherin' me:
There was a feller there, a big bug;
And he said in his openin' remarks that he'd
been livin'
In one of them European countries,
And he had n't felt rightly to hum
Sence he come
Back, till he got up here and met a feller

That give him a clip on the back, and says to
him
"You durned old skunk you, but I *be* glad to
see you!"
They laughed at that, the speaker crowd I
mean,
And I laughed too, but I dunno as I should uv
If they had n't laughed first.
It seems to me a natural thing to say,
Considerin' that he had been away
So long, and the other feller *was* glad to
see him, too.
How does it strike you?

KEERLESS

One day,
Uncle Sid was way
Off down in his mowin', in the South Medder,
Turnin' the hay
With that patent horse-tedder
He had borried from the Jones boys,
When there come up the tarnationist thunderstorm
I ever see in these parts.
It struck his hen-house
And tore off the clabboards,
And ripped up the roof, and then took to a tree.
You kin see to-day
Where it splintered;
And then it follered down in a roundabout way,

And come out of the ground
Half-way down a bank.
It come out slick as a whistle,
Leavin' a glassy hole as big as my arm.
It might have done a sight of harm
If it had come out, say in the house.
And when he come home, he found
His folks all of a twitter;
Kind of histeriky, his wife was,
(She was a nervous sort of a critter.)
But he jest soused his face in the basin at the sink,
While they was fussin' and then wiped it careful on the towel;
Remarkin' in his delibrit way,
"Kinder keerless, wa'n't it?"

MUSIC AND SCIENCE

Gus Graves he moved away from here —
  Let me see —
  It must be,
Wall, pretty nigh onto twenty year ago.
Folks said he was in love with Nancy Blake,
  Her that was Nancy Munn;
But they fell out
  At somethin' she had done,
    And he skittered — left, mad as a hornet;
These Graveses was allers high-tempered.
  Anyhow he stayed away twenty years or so.
  But he come back a year ago,
Jest to see her, and he found her bed-rid,
And had been so for years and years;
Had n't set up once for a meal or a cup of tea.

Did I tell you he useter play the cornet?
Wall, he did, and what do you think that feller
done?
Ef he did n't jest climb clean to the top of
Fort Hill,
And set there, and play his old tunes to her,
Like he useter do. Gosh! but it sounded sweet!
I'd give a dollar to hear it ag'in.
It kinder floated down mysterious-like;
The moon wa'n't full, but mighty pretty,
And the mist riz up from the river
And filled the valley. You could n't tell
Where the sound come from.

Did she die that night? Gosh-a-mighty, no!
She's better now 'n she's ben for many a year.
Gits out to meetin', and to Church Sociables,
And all the other doin's.
But if *I* was as sick as she *would* be,
Ef it wa'n't for her religion,
I'd go to bed and stay there.
She believes she was cured by some kind
of science;
But I could n't place no reliance
On jest *thinkin'* things *is* so, that *ain't* so.

But it is a durn
Sight better'n bein' sick,
And it works in some cases,
Like hern.

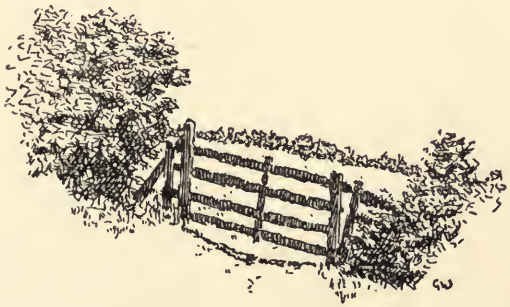
JEST SET

'Lanson Smith married Almon Hubbel's half-
sister
Maria, the one Almon Hubbel's wife
Said she didn't care if she never see ag'in.
Maria *was* a dose, but she done her duty,
Once she seen it.
She was Orthodox to the core,
And he was Unitarian, and rather sore
On the subjec' 'cause he had turned coat
the year before.
Folks ast her where she'd worship now,
Seein' she'd got married;
And she said as how
They'd fixed it up that *she*

Should go to his church, every other Sabbath,
And on the off Sunday *he*
Would go to hern.
"I shall *worship*," says she, "in the Orthodox
pew,
And jest *set* in the Unitarian."

PREPAREDNESS

Uncle Sid used to go to sleep
On a glass of milk,
And quarter of a mince pie.
"Ain't it rather heavy, Uncle Sid?" says I.
"No," says he, "and it's a heap
Better if you acidulate the milk
With a *lee*tle cider."



AIN'T THAT IS

Old Mis' Hunt used to say,
When folks ast her ef married or unmarried
folks
Was the happiest: "Wall, I guess
There's more that is, that ain't,
Than ain't, that is."
I dunno; but I know that Mose Larkin
Was 'bout the happiest feller I ever see —
And he did n't never git married.
He was sociable-like, too, and carried
On a lot with the girls.
He used to talk to himself
All the way up the hill,
When he was goin' home from the tannery.
I kin hear him still,
Sayin' over and over ag'in, like he was havin'
A real good time:

"Ef I had a wife,
And her name was Sairy;
And we had a darter,
And her name was Mary;
When I git home to-night, I 'd say, 'Sairy,
where's Mary?'"
Folks laughed
At him, and said he was daft.
But I kinder ketched the idee,
And b' gosh! I've said them words over so
often to myself,
That I'm most afraid folks'll ketch *me*
Some time, sayin' it out loud.

MERCY BUNTIN'

Mercy Buntin' ain't exactly what you call
flighty,
But she certainly does say onexpected things,
at times.
She was mighty
Low in her mind
When her husband Hezekiah died,
And says she, standin' by his coffin-side,
"I snum, it don't seem to me
As if I should *ever* git married ag'in!"

Another time her sister died
And I said to her, "Mercy, I'm afraid
You'll be
Sorter lonesome now, all by yourself in the
house."

"Y-e-e-s," says she,
"But there'll be more closet-room."
It was house-cleanin' time, though,
And I ruther guess
Women-folks is sorter demented
At them times.

INFIDELITY

ZENAS WOODARD was an infidel.
They was scarcer in them days, I reckon,
  Than they be now.
  Anyhow,
He was quite a figger in town.
Folks had n't any particular use for *him.*
But they kep' a-borryin' his wheelbarrer
Just the same, without askin'.
  Sometimes he got so r'iled
  He almost sp'iled
To git back at 'em somehow.
So he says to his wife one day,
"Tirzah," says he,

"My wheelbarrer 's goin' to jine my church —
Even if it leaves some folks in the lurch."
Wall, he took and painted in big red letters,
INFIDELITY
Acrost the front.
And afterwards he was mighty particular
To leave the wheelbarrer
Sign-end-to, in the shed,
So 'st folks could n't git misled.
Sometimes he 'd look at the letters
Sorter contented-like, and say:
"That wheelbarrer of mine seems
To be gittin' quite a considerable spell of rest."

THE PESSIMIST

HANK RICE opines
The town's goin' to the dawgs,
Fast: nothin's as it useter be.
Women-folks is buyin' pork and lard
'Cause it comes too hard
On the men-folks to raise hawgs.
He says there ain't a decent yoke
Of oxen in the town.
And as fer steers,
Hank bets there ain't
A pair been raised and broke
For six or seven years.
And I guess he's about right, there.
He spoke
To Sim Tyler a while back,
And ast him to break in a pair —
Hank bein' down with a spell of rhumatiz.
"Land alack, man!" says Sim,
"There ain't a feller
Fer ten miles round, that'd tackle that job."

Hank was clean disgusted;
He says the town will soon go busted
At this rate. I could n't soothe him.
"And," says he, gittin' solemn,
And p'intin' his finger to Bald Hill,
"You see that there mountain?
Wall! That *used* to be
The highest mountain in the hull county,
Till some of them surveyin' fellers
Come up from Boston
And clum to the top of Catamount,
And h'isted a flag up there.
I declare for't," says he, "it hurt my feelin's!
And I leave it to you
If 't ain't a sin and a shame —
Not a single decent yoke of oxen in the hull place,
And *every single house on the street*
Has got a dam' tumpty-tum-tum in the parlor!"

CONSOLATION

Last fall, 'Bijah Larkin was all-possessed
To hear what folks up this way said when they heered
He 'd got nominated fer the Legislature. He guessed
Some on 'em would be much impressed.
So he come meechin'
'Round down to the tavern, late
And early, talkin' politics, and lookin' big,
And preachin'
'Bout his duty to the state.
But he did n't git much satisfaction out of us.
Cause we boys had all agreed to keep mum.
It come hard to some,
Seein' as he wa'n't none too popular.

Finally he could n't stan' it no longer, so he took
A chanst to sound Jake Baggs,
When he druv him over to Baptist Four Corners.
"By the way," says he, off-hand-like,
"What did folks, up this way, say 'bout my nomination?"
"Oh," says Jake, in a consolin' tone, shakin' his head slow,
"They jest laughed, 'Bijah."

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